

FISH & WILDLIFE COMMISSION AGENDA ITEM COVER SHEET

Meeting Date: May 12, 2016

Agenda Item: Grizzly Bear Tri-State Memorandum of Agreement

Division: Wildlife

Action Needed: Proposed

Time Needed on Agenda for this Presentation: 30 Min

Background: The Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem (GYE) grizzly bear population is recovered and has been proposed for delisting. The proposed delisting rule includes demographic criteria, including mortality thresholds that will need to be met to maintain recovery. The states of Montana, Idaho, and Wyoming along with state and federal habitat managers are in the process of updating a Conservation Strategy that has guided management since 2007, including demographic criteria required in the recovery plan and proposed delisting rule. The Conservation Strategy will serve as the post-delisting management plan for GYE grizzly bears. A proposed appendix to the updated Conservation Strategy is a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) between Montana, Idaho, and Wyoming that defines the process by which the three states will coordinate the management and allocation of discretionary mortality of grizzly bears in the GYE. By agreeing to the stipulations of the MOA, the states will ensure annual total mortality rates are not exceeded within the Demographic Monitoring Area (DMA) for independent males, independent females and dependent young, as set forth in the following table. These adjustable mortality rates were calculated as those necessary to manage the population around the 2002-2014 Chao 2 modeled average (\bar{X} = 674; 95% CI = 600-747 which occurred during the time period when the population reached a biological carrying capacity.

	Total Grizzly Bear Population Estimate		
	≤ 674	675-747	> 747
Total mortality rate for independent <u>FEMALES</u>.	$\leq 7.6\%$	9%	10%
Total mortality rate for independent <u>MALES</u>.	$\leq 15\%$	20%	22%
Total mortality rate for dependent young.	$\leq 7.6\%$	9%	10%

Public Involvement Process & Results: With approval by the Commission, this draft MOA will go out for public review for a 30-day period. The basic components of the MOA (e.g., the above table) are also in the proposed federal delisting rule, recovery plan amendment, and draft conservation strategy, which were all recently available for public comment through the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. The Idaho and Wyoming Fish and Wildlife Commissions are also considering approving the same MOA

Alternatives and Analysis: An alternative is to not enter into the MOA, and rely on the three states to meet the intent of the MOA through coordinated management. However, this provides less regulatory certainty to critics of delisting, and will make delisting more subject to litigation challenge.

Agency Recommendation & Rationale: FWP recommends the Commission approve the MOA

Proposed Motion:

I move the Fish and Wildlife Commission approve the draft MOA for public comment